Finding Aid to the Frances Densmore Papers MS.557

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2012
Title: Frances Densmore Papers
Identifier/Call Number: MS.557
Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Braun Research Library
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.75 Linear feet (2 boxes)
Date (bulk): Bulk, 1907-1957
Date (inclusive): 1899-1961
Abstract: Frances Densmore was an American ethnographer and ethnomusicologist born in 1867 in Red Wing, Minnesota. She wrote more than 20 books and 100 articles. She also made more than 2,000 wax cylinder recordings of Native music, including recordings for the Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) in 1907. Densmore died on June 5, 1957 at the age of 90. The Francis Densmore Papers consist of manuscripts, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and ephemera from 1899-1961. The bulk of the material was created from 1907-1957.
creator: Densmore, Frances, 1867-1957
creator: Hewett, Edgar L. (Edgar Lee), 1865-1946
creator: Hodge, Frederick Webb, 1864-1956
creator: James, George Wharton, 1858-1923
creator: Mead, Margaret, 1901-1978
creator: Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962.
Preferred citation
Frances Densmore Papers, 1899-1961, Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.557; [folder number] [folder title][date].
Restriction note
Correspondence in Folder 10 not to be copied or cited per donor agreement.
Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at room@theautry.org.
Biographical note
Frances Densmore was an American ethnographer and ethnomusicologist. Born in 1867 in Red Wing, Minnesota, Densmore became interested in Native American music after reading about the ethnomusicology of the Omaha tribe. She began her work in Minnesota by studying and recording the music of the Dakota and Ojibwe tribes. She also traveled across North America where she met with the Chippewa, Mandan, Hidatsa, Sioux, northern Pawnee of Oklahoma, Papago of Arizona, Indians of Washington state and British Columbia, Winnebago and Menominee of Wisconsin, Pueblo Indians of the Southwest, and the Tule Indians of Panama. She conducted fieldwork using a box camera and a cylinder phonograph. She wrote more than 20 books and 100 articles. She also made more than 2,000 wax cylinder recordings of Native music, including recordings for the Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) in 1907. She frequently published articles in the journals American Anthropologist and the Southwest Museum's Masterkey publication. Densmore is especially noted for her recordings of Native American music and documenting their culture at a time when white settlers were moving into Native lands and encouraging tribes to adopt Western customs. Densmore died on June 5, 1957 at the age of 90.
Scope and Contents note
This collections consists of materials dating from 1899-1961, the bulk of which was created from 1907-1957. Included are lectures and writings by Densmore on Native American music; melodic analysis of seventy-five Cheyenne and Arapaho songs; correspondence with Frederick Webb Hodge; letters to Densmore; published articles by Densmore in newspapers and journals; and writings about Densmore’s work, life, and health. The collection also includes an original drawing by Eagle Shield that was included in Densmore's Teton Sioux Music publication.
Use
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Custodial history
The papers of Frances Densmore were compiled individually by Frances Densmore, Dr. Joseph Amasa Munk and Southwest Museum staff, particularly Dr. Frederick Webb Hodge and Fred Kimpton Hinchman. Some material was also acquired through the Library's General Acquisitions Fund. The papers were deposited to the Southwest Museum Library, currently known as the Braun Research Library, before 1978.

Processing history

Series 1: Correspondence, 1910-1953
Series 2: Manuscripts and music analysis, 1899-1954
Series 3: Lectures, 1935-1938
Series 4: Publications about Densmore, 1936-1957
Series 5: Publications by Densmore, 1907-1954

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Southwest Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Arapaho Indians -- Music
Cheyenne Indians -- Music
Clippings
Correspondence
Dakota Indians
Ethnologists
Ethnomusicologists
Hidatsa Indians
Indians of North America -- Music
Indians of North America -- Washington (State)
Maidu Indians
Mandan Indians
Manuscripts
Musicologists
Ojibwa Indians
Pawnee Indians
Tohono O'odham Indians

Correspondence, Series 1: 1910-1953

Box 1, Folder 10

Correspondence, Bulk, 1926-1950
1908, 1926-1950

Scope and contents
This correspondence folder primarily consists of letters to Frances Densmore. It also includes "circular letters" that were mailed to Densmore, but were written for mass distribution.

Restriction note
No copying or quotations allowed, to be used for reference only.

Arrangement
Alphabetically by last name or by type.

Acquisition
Donated by Frances Watkins to the Southwest Museum Library, 1950 September 28.
Ackerknecht, Erwin H. 1950 February 17
Adams, Harriet Chalmers, 1933 January 3
Alexander, H.B. 1936 August 4
Aliferis, James, 1949 November 22
Altshuler, Ira M. 1944 May 29
Alvarez, Walter, 1944 December 2
Anderson, August H. 1946 November 6
Mary, Austin, 1934
Buck, Solon J. 1942 November 28
Busch, Carl, 1932 May 20
Camp, Charles L. 1947 April 7
Cole, Fay-Cooper, 1933 April 28
Collier, John 1937 27 December
Scope and contents
Letter is from Collier to Honorable Elmer Thomas. The letter is concerning Densmore's work with the Bureau of American Ethnology.

Cooke, James Francis, 1941 July 9
Dobie, J. Frank, 1937 May 12
Emrich, Duncan, 1950 June 20
Fagg, William, 1950 September 4
Scope and contents
Letter from England.

Gamio, Dr. Manuel, 1950 September 4
Scope and contents
Letter from Mexico.

Hand, Wayland D. 1949 June 8
Hanson, Howard, 1946 December 9
D’Harnoncourt, Rene, 1942 November 4
Herskovits, Melville J. 1949 December 6
Hertzog, George, 1946 December 19
Hewett, Edgar L. 1933 May 7
Heye George G. 1945 November 27
Heynik, J. 1947 May 5
Scope and contents
Typed copy of letter. Letter from the Netherlands.

Hotz, Gottfried 1945 December 19
Scope and contents
Typed copy of letter. Letter from Switzerland.

Huntington, Frances Carpenter, 1941 December 16
James, George Wharton 1908 January 25
Scope and contents
Typed copy of letter.

Jenness, Diamond, 1934 January 13
Scope and contents
Letter from Canada.

Judd, Neil M. 1947 July 10
Kelley, Mrs. Edgar Stillman, 1929 March 19
Kroeber, Alfred L. 1944 September 28
Leake, Chauncey D. 1946 October 16
Linton, Ralph, 1942 October 6
Lowie, Robert H. 1933 May 1
Lundeen, Ernest, 1937 March 4
Mason, J. Alden, 1947 June 26
Mayson, Christopher, 1926 January 19

Scope and contents
Letter from England.

Mencken, H. L. (Henry Louis), September 28

Scope and contents
Year of letter unknown.

Metcessel, Milton, 1926 July 28
Menzies, P.T.O. 1939 October 23

Scope and contents
Letter from British Columbia, Canada.

Miller, Dayton C. 1937 October 26
Sandburg, Carl, 1930 June 23
Seeger, Charles, 1943-1944
Seton, Ernest Thompson, 1931 February 9
Seton, Grace Thompson, 1928 March 16
Shipstead, Henrik, 1946 January 18
Sigerist, H.E. 1946 October 17
Smith, Cecil, 1950 January 21
Smith, Maurice G. 1930 May 6
Sonneck, O.G. 1927 July 18
Spaeth, Sigmund, 1946 June 26
Speck, Frank G. 1942-1943
Spivacke, Harold, 1942 October 27
Stafford, Marie Peary, 1950 June 5
Starr, Helen K. 1949 June 2
Stirling, M. W. 1946 May 20
Tozzer, Alfred 1941 May 28
True, W.P. 1950 April 5
Turck, Charles J. 1950 February 27
Van de Wall, Willem, 1926 March 5
Watson, Dudley Crafts, 1933 August 22

Circular letters 1944-1950

Scope and contents
These letters were not addressed directly to Densmore, but were written for mass distribution.

Cattell, Jaques, 1950 May 18
Krogman, W. M. 1944 April 10
Mead, Margaret, undated
Sinnott, Edmund R. undated
United Nations Fund of the American Association for the United Nations, Inc. 1950 November 21

Scope and contents
Letter signed by Eleanor Roosevelt and Ralph J. Bunch.
Box 1, Folder 11

Correspondence, 1910-1953

Arrangement
Alphabetically by last name.

Abbott, C.G. 1938
Alvarez, Walter C. 1951
Austin, Mary, 1934
Buck, Solon J. 1946
Burnett, E.K. 1946
Clapham, John, 1953
Cooke, James Francis, 1946, 1953
Hanson, Howard, 1946, 1951
Henderson, H.G. 1936, 1937
Herzog, George, 1946, 1952
Hodge, Frederick Webb, 1950-1952

Scope and contents
Eight letters.

Jenks, Albert Ernest, 1910, 1912

Scope and contents
No letters, only includes signatures.

Malagón, Javier, 1952
Menzies, T.P.O. 1946
Ortíz, Fernando, 1951
Seeger, Charles, 1946
Shapiro, Karl, 1951
Spaeth, Sigmund, 1951
Spier, Leslie, 1945-1946
Stevenson, E., 1953
Turck, Charles J. 1952
Voegelin, 1946
Walker, R. 1937

Scope and contents
Letter is from Japan.

Weed, Charles K. 1923
Unknown author, undated

Box 1, Folder 14

Correspondence with Frederick Webb Hodge, 1953

Scope and contents
Includes some biographical details about Densmore.

Box 1, Folder 17

Copy of letter of Dr. C. E. Seashore about Frances Densmore's hearing ability, undated

Lectures, Series 2: 1899-1954
Lectures, Series 2: 1899-1954
Lectures, 1909-1932

Box 1, Folder 1

Lectures, 1909-1932
Language of Material: English
Scope and contents
Dates reflect when lecture was given. Some items are typed copies created after the lecture date.

Sioux and Chippewa music, 1932 February 1
Chippewa Chiefs interviews, 1932 March 2
Scope and contents
Materials include typed transcripts from two out of three talks Densmore conducted about the "Indians of Minnesota" for WCCO Radio Minneapolis in 1932. Typed transcripts created 1953 January.

"Music of the American Indians", 1899 February 21
Language of Material: English
Scope and contents
Lecture delivered at the Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois. Folder consists of two typed copies of lecture, typed in 1944 and 1953.

"Music of the American Indians", 1909 April 26
Scope and contents

Box 1, Folder 12

Lecture notice containing biographical information, undated

Box 2, Folder 13

Announcements related to Densmore lectures, 1899-1954
Scope and contents
Lecture announcements pertain to recitals on American Indians, circa 1899; recitals announced in Indian School Journal, 1907; Music Library National Convention, 1954; and the Macalester College Conference on Human Development, 1948, where Frances Densmore was an honored guest.

Box 1, Folder 9

Programs and articles, 1946-1954
Scope and contents
Includes concert programs featuring Densmore or her music and articles about or by Densmore.

Minneapolis Symphony program, 1949 November 27
Scope and contents
Includes a piece on themes found by Densmore.

Music News issue, 1954 March 8
Scope and contents
Publication of University of Florida, Gainesville.

“Tribute to Miss Densmore”, circa 1946
Scope and contents
Published in Rio University’s Daily Eagle.
“Theme of Composition”, undated

Scope and contents
Small article from unknown press regarding “musicals incorporating Indian themes
gathered by Miss Frances Densmore.”

**Manuscripts and music analysis, Series 3: 1935-1938**

Scope and contents
This series consists of manuscripts and correspondence between Frederick Webb Hodge and
Densmore. Most of the materials in this series are related Densmore publications *Cheyenne and Arapaho Music*, Southwest Museum Papers, number 10 and *Music of Santo Domingo Pueblo, New Mexico*, Southwest Museum Papers, number 12.

**Box 1, Folder 2**
**Melodic analysis of seventy-five Cheyenne and Arapaho Songs, circa 1936**

Scope and contents
Includes form with note by Hodge, “specimen of blank used in interval analysis of Indian
songs”.

**Box 1, Folder 3**
**Correspondence with Frederick Webb Hodge, 1935**

**Letter from Hodge to Densmore 1935 November 16**
Language of Material: English

**Letter from Densmore to Hodge 1935 November 16**
Language of Material: English

Scope and contents
Includes material noted by Densmore as “Cheyenne and Arapaho songs recorded on
a cylinder phonograph and copies on disks.”

**Box 1, Folder 4**
**Melodic analysis of 103 Santo Domingo Songs, circa 1938**

**Box 1, Folder 5**
“Music of Santo Domingo Pueblo” original score, circa 1938

**Box 1, Folder 6**
“The Musical Instruments and dance songs of the Maidu Indians” partial manuscript,
1937 May 11

**Box 1, Folder 7**
**Maidu Music manuscripts and galley proofs, circa 1937**

**Box 1, Folder 31**
**Reviews of “Cheyenne and Arapaho Music” and “Music of Santo Domingo Pueblo”,
1938**

**Box 1, Folder 15**
**Sioux Sun Dance drawing with note from Frances Densmore, 1946**

Scope and contents
Original sketch by Eagle Shield. Upper part of drawing for Plate 17, Smithsonian
Sioux Sun Dance.

Accession number
1062.G.2

Acquisition
Gift of Frances Densmore to the Southwest Museum, 1946.

**Box 1, Folder 25**
**Tone photograph taken by Dr. Dayton C. Miller, undated**

**Publications about Densmore, Series 4: 1936-1957**

**Box 1, Folder 16**
**Honorable August H. Anderson speech on Frances Densmore research, 1952 April 25**

Scope and contents
Speech presented in Minnesota for the House of Representatives.

**Box 1, Folder 18**
**Newspaper clippings, 1936-1947**

*Minnesota Archeologist II*, number 12. 1936 December
*Time*, 1938 November 7
Publications about Densmore, Series 4: 1936-1957

Minneapolis Times Tribune, 1940 May 6
Minneapolis Tribune, 1947 May 18
St. Paul Pioneer Press, 1947 May 21
Oberlin Alumni magazine, 1947 August

Newspaper clippings, 1939-1954
"Indian Songs Theme of Paper Prepared by Miss Densmore", Red Wing Daily Eagle, Red Wing, Minnesota. 1939 July 8
"Noted Music Consultant at [University of Florida] for 2 months", Gainesville Daily Sun, Gainesville, Florida. 1954 March 24
"Navaho Songs Used at Art Exhibit", Daily Republican Eagle, Red Wing, Minnesota. 1943 November 30
"Anthology of Indian Songs Praises Frances Densmore" Red Wing Daily Republican, undated

Minneapolis Star, 1953-1954
Scope and contents
Includes articles from 1953 July 1 and 1954 October 12 issues.

Minneapolis Morning Tribune, 1950 June 6
Scope and contents
Issue includes program for Macalester College sixty-first commencement.

Minneapolis Tribune, 1949 October 23
St. Paul Dispatch, 1954 October 12
St. Paul Pioneer Press, 1950 May 26

Box 1, Folder 20
Obituary from New York Times, 1957 June 7

Box 1, Folder 30
The Minnesota Archaeologist, Spring 1957 issue, circa 1957
Scope and contents
This publication is dedicated to Densmore by the Minnesota Archeological Society. All of the articles in this issue relate to Densmore's career, accomplishments, and contributions to the field of archeology. Also included in the folder is a typed letter from Sidney A. Peterson, Research Assistant in Ethnology at the Science Museum of the Saint Paul Institute to Carl S. Dentzel, Director of the Southwest Museum. The letter is dated 1961 January 30.

Publications by Densmore, Series 5: 1907-1954

Box 1, Folder 8
Bibliography of Densmore writings in Journal of Musicology volume 4, numbers 2 and 3. circa 1942

Box 1, Folder 9
"Technique in the Music of the American Indian", 1953
Scope and contents
From Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Anthropological Paper, no. 36.

Box 1, Folder 27
"Indian Music" articles, 1921,1941
"Indian Music" El Palacio, volume 10, numbers 13 and 14. 1921 June 15
"Music of the Indians in Our Western States" paper abstract, undated

Box 1, Folder 12
Articles by Densmore circa 1926-1936
"The Songs of the Indians", 1926 January
Scope and contents
Published in American Mercury, pages 65-68.
“Indian Music Form of Prayer, Woman Asserts”, 1926, 1936
Scope and contents
Published in St. Paul Dispatch 1926 July 30 and Minnesota Archaeologist volume 2, issue 12, December 1936.

Box 1, Folder 28

Music of specific tribes, 1932, 1939
"Musical Instruments of the Maidu Indians", American Anthropologist, volume 41, number 1. 1939 January - March
"A Resemblance Between Yuman and Pueblo Songs", American Anthropologist, volume 34, number 4. 1932 October-December

Box 1, Folder 26

"Music of the American Indian" articles, 1907-1954

"Music of the American Indians", Overland Monthly undated
"Songs of the Brown Children", The Indian School Journal, volume 8, number 1. 1907 November
"The Music of the American Indian", 1954 March 31
Scope and contents
Printed from address to Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Florida


Box 1, Folder 24

Articles about Indian music and treatment of sick, 1952-1954


Box 1, Folder 29

Indian music articles, 1943, 1953

“The Use of meaningless Syllables in Indian Songs” American Anthropologist, volume 45. 1943


Box 1, Folder 22

Indian Action Songs booklet, undated
Scope and contents
Booklet designed for school children and includes songs and instructions for pantomime.

Box 1, Folder 23
"The Use of the Term 'Tetrachord' in Musicology", *Journal of Musicology*, volume 1, number 4, pages 16-21. 1940

March

Scope and contents

Two copies.